

# CPSC Warns Against Placing Babies in Adult Beds

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**Study finds 64 deaths each year from suffocation and strangulation**

The U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) is warning parents and caregivers about the dangers of placing babies to sleep in adult beds. According to a CPSC study, placing babies to sleep in adult beds puts them at risk of suffocation or strangulation and is a danger of which many parents and caregivers are unaware. The study revealed an average 64 deaths per year to babies under the age of 2 years placed to sleep in adult beds, including waterbeds and daybeds. A review of incident data from January 1990 to December 1997 linked adult beds to at least 515 baby deaths. Analysis of the deaths revealed four major hazard patterns:

- Suffocation associated with the co-sleeping of adult and baby.
- Suffocation where an infant becomes entrapped or wedged between the mattress and another object.
- Suffocation due to airway obstruction when the baby is face down on a waterbed mattress.
- Strangulation in rails or openings on beds that allow a baby's body to pass through while entrapping the head.

CPSC's study is the first to quantify the number of fatalities resulting from the practice of co-sleeping with babies. Of the 515 deaths, 121 were reported to be due to a parent, caregiver or sibling rolling on top of or against the baby while sleeping. More than three-quarters of these deaths occurred to infants younger than three months.

One of the most tragic aspects of these deaths is that they are largely preventable. In many cases, the adult placing the baby on the adult bed was unaware of or underestimated the danger posed. The practice of co-sleeping can result in the adult rolling on top of or next to the baby smothering him or her. Mothers who breast-feed should be alerted to this hazard and should be encouraged to return the baby to the crib after breast-feeding.

The other 394 deaths resulted from suffocation or strangulation caused by entrapment of the child's head in various structures of the bed. Entrapments occurred between the mattress and the wall, bed frame, headboard, footboard, bed railings or adjacent furniture.

"Don't sleep with your baby or put the baby down to sleep in an adult bed," said CPSC Chairman Ann Brown. The only safe place for babies is in a crib that meets current safety standards and has a firm, tight-fitting mattress. Place babies to sleep on their backs and remove all soft bedding and pillow like items from the crib,"

